



Environmental Education Campus - Project Update

Project background

Yosemite Institute, a Yosemite National Park non-profit partner, operates an environmental education campus at Crane Flat under a cooperative agreement with the park. This campus serves both the park and Yosemite Institute by fulfilling their shared mission to promote visitor understanding, stewardship, and appreciation of diverse park environments.

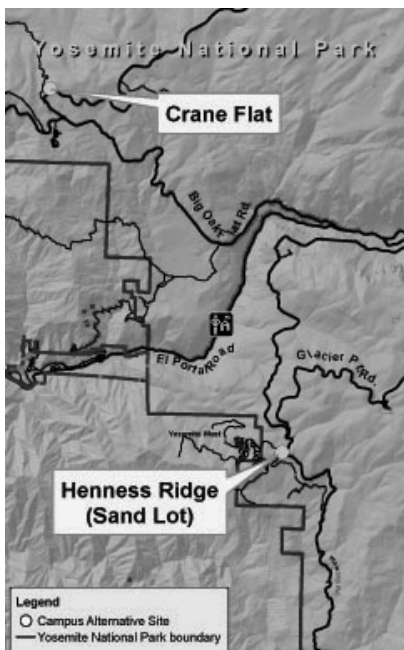


The campus at Crane Flat has served as an educational facility since 1971. The facilities are comprised of older buildings and structures that have been assembled over time and were not originally designed for educational purposes. To address this issue, the park and Yosemite Institute began preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2002. Public scoping was completed in November 2002.

What are the goals of this project?

The goals of this project are to:

- Provide an environmental education campus location and program that serves the combined missions of Yosemite National Park and Yosemite Institute
- Facilitate multi-day educational programs that complement California State Standards and offer opportunities for research and study of the natural world
- Provide a campus facility that is sustainable in design and enables high quality, immersive, and safe educational experiences for students
- Promote development of future stewards of the environment and the National Park system



How is the park responding to issues and concerns?

The park received comments from the public and park staff regarding concerns about possible impacts to sensitive areas and natural resources and suggested that a wider range of alternatives be considered. In response to these issues and concerns, the project team is continuing to collect and analyze resource data for the Crane Flat area (i.e., vegetation, wildlife, hydrologic, and cultural resource data), and expanded the range of options to consider ten additional sites.

In April 2006, National Park Service staff (representing a broad range of disciplines) and Yosemite National Institute staff participated in a “Choosing by Advantage” workshop. Using an established set of criteria, the group evaluated site suitability and ranked the eleven sites as to whether they would be reasonable, feasible, and meet the project purpose and need. One of the sites at Henness Ridge, the “Sand Lot,” ranked far above all other sites.

The project team presented the workshop results to park management, and a decision has been made to include the Sand Lot site as an alternative for full analysis in the EIS.

What are the next steps?

In spring and summer 2006, the project team collected information on the new alternative site for the Draft EIS, and anticipates releasing the Draft EIS for public review in winter 2008. The proposed action for this project would be implemented after a Record of Decision is signed at the conclusion of the environmental impact analysis process.

Public participation

Although initial public scoping has ended, public participation is welcomed and continues to be vital in this planning process. Here are some ways to stay involved in the Environmental Education Campus Project:

- Attend future National Park Service open houses in Yosemite Valley to meet with project specialists and take a look at the latest available information.
- Add your name to the park's planning mailing list (to address/fax/email below) and receive the *Planning Update* newsletter as well as other planning-related notices. You can also submit your email address to receive Yosemite's periodic electronic newsletter.

Mail: Superintendent
Attn: *Environmental Education Campus Project*
P.O. Box 577
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The status of this and other Yosemite National Park improvement projects will be periodically updated on the park's planning web site. Visit online: www.nps.gov/yose/planning.

To learn more about the Yosemite Institute program, visit www.yni.org/yi

